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ON THE NEED OF SYSTEMATIC STUDY OF RELIGION.

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Present theological training defective in comparative religion.—Lacking, for example, knowledge of Buddhism and of Phallicism.—Analogy from other spheres where Oriental data check Occidental.—Especial need of this knowledge of religion as such in the missionary field.—Non-Christian religions worthy of attention.—Institutions where hierology can be studied.

The matter of education is everywhere vital. If the materialist's coarse maxim, "*Mann ist was er isst*," has but a modicum of truth when meant of the food physical, it has a maximum when applied to the mental. Of course the maxim, in the latter sense, applies with undiminished force to theological education, and the recent contribution in the columns of *The Outlook* to that branch of the subject, under the caption, "The College and the Ministry, by President C. F. Thwing," has therefore probably secured many interested readers. As one of these I venture to submit the following as an extension of what seems to me the real import of the whole. Of the eight responses to the question, "What more and what better can the colleges do in fitting men for the study of theology?" five included an increase in the attention paid to philosophy. One in particular, that of Professor H. M. Scott, very justly deplored "inadequate acquaintance with the history of mental movement in all lands and all ages." As a layman that has patiently endured and barely survived thousands of sermons in which all post-Apostolic and non-Christian thought were not simply subordinated but totally ignored, in which the religious knowledge shown was just as narrowly limited to the preacher's racial environment as that of a Taoist, in which scripture examples were cited with an unabashed repetitiousness that nothing but religious reverence could

or would tolerate, I gladly add my voice to the demand for wider education in philosophy, especially in the philosophy of religion and its indispensable propædæutic, the history and science of religion, for none of which has provision, until recently, been made in any college, university, or seminary in the land. Yet what among the "mental movements in all lands and all ages" can more closely concern the theological student than those denominated religious? Said Professor H. Drummond in the course of a recent address in the University of Chicago, "Present day religious knowledge is scrappy, composed of disconnected sermons, each one of which dislodges the preceding. It stands in need of principles." This witness is true, and will remain so until both an inductive and psychologic study of religion in its broadest manifestations supplies the principles. Like Gautama the Buddha in his turning for light from the ever conventional faith of society to the metaphysics of Brahmanism, thence to the folly of asceticism, and last to his own unaided heart responses, many an inquiring mind has passed through college and seminary and left them to get oriented in the vast field of thought by his own adventure or not at all. Over and over have I heard the regret expressed by ministerial friends that they had so few opportunities for philosophic training in college or seminary, and that they so underestimated what they had.

Nor does the theological student stand alone in his ignorance of the broader facts and laws of religion. In spite of the present wonderful diffusion of knowledge, I found while resident many years in the Orient, on the highway of travel, each and every visitor making frank confession of ignorance on the topic of non-Christian religions. When accompanying such visitors, as I sometimes could do, I found auditors, not so much attentive as astonished at the notions involved in an understanding of the little they saw. Said a professor of Princeton College to me on one such occasion, "Why, our students know nothing about Buddhism," and at that time the statement held good of every other institution in the United States. That Princeton did not alone ignore that vast and wonderful religion appeared from the stultifying query put by the Buddhist Dharmapala at the Parlia-

ment of Religions as to how many of his five thousand hearers had read the life of the great teacher, and from the humiliating reply that about five had. Five out of five thousand, and they the pick of the religious world, its preachers and teachers! And that statement was based probably on a perusal of Sir Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia*, rather the rhapsody of a poet than the dispassionate description of a historian. Meanwhile the claim of Schopenhauer to the distinction awarded him by Professor R. Flint, of first directing philosophy to an evaluation of life was long ago preëmpted by the Enlightened One, and the conclusions he reached have by others been carried to a sequel which probably preëmpts also those yet to follow the German's doctrine in the West. One would suppose it might be worth while for our religious guides to study this movement in order to forfend the West from a like descent into apathy or idolatry with the East. But, as it was in Macaulay's days, when, as he said, "A broken head in Cold Bath Fields produces a greater sensation than three pitched battles in India," so it is now and here in religion. Its mightiest problems, tried on the grandest scale through milleniums of time, receive no attention from us, because, forsooth, the work was done in remote and despised Asia! And this neglect of our learned class finds an echo in the disrespect of business circles for things noble and sacred, provided they are so only for men of darker skin and variant profile. There lies before me a packet of tea bearing as trademark a tree and an elephant, with the word *Bhud* beside them. Below is added the following explanation: "Was formerly Buddha. Altered at the request of the Buddhist Defence Committee of Ceylon." The *raison d'être* of such a committee will be questioned by no unprejudiced observer. Imagine the outraged feelings with which *we* should see our Christian symbols, the ever significant cross and dove joined with the sacred name of Christ, in use by Buddhists as a brand for our canned beef! Yet the Bodhi tree and elephant are the Buddhist analogues of the Christian cross and dove, while Buddha is the name of the only saviour known to millions of our race.

Another striking case of neglect appears in the general and

total ignorance of phallicism. An extensive acquaintance with college and divinity graduates leads me to venture the forecast that not two in ten from those classes that read this article know even the meaning of the word, Greek though it be, and ubiquitous in the history of religion; and though it prevail at the present time to the extent of requiring in India alone an estimated number of thirty millions of symbols, with perhaps as many hundreds in Japan; while its survivals—to use the technical but expressive word of Dr. Tylor—in higher faiths, in literature, and custom are alone amply sufficient to justify its careful study. And the interest of its nature corresponds to the extent of its distribution. It puts in clearer light than most phases of religion known to me the essential notions of all religion, and, perhaps, best of all, the fact of its progress from the beginning even until now.

The truth is that the sphere of religion is broader than that of Christianity, that, although as we confidently believe, Christianity is the highest form of religion, it is not the only religion. Just as God did not make man and leave Aristotle to make him rational, so neither did he make man and leave Moses to make him religious. Man is a religious animal, always and everywhere, as the anthropologist has recently concluded. Now just as one may first notice a friend's gait when he is too distant or in too poor a light to show the more characteristically human features which would otherwise attract attention, so the student of comparative religion—of hierology—gains peculiar insights from the lower forms of religion, insights into facts which, though extant in Christianity, have there entirely escaped observation. Were it not for the evangelical practice of spiritualizing everything contained in the Old Testament, much of such instruction might be gained from the lower religious view-points held by patriarchs and prophets. And much has of late been done under the misnomer of literary study of the Bible—really comparative study of the various religious stages represented in the Bible—to use the Old Testament, that priceless repertory of religious history in the historic and comparative way. But the Bible, though at any rate to us, and also for us,

the best extant history of religion, is of course not the only such history, and the lessons to be learned from it not the only lessons that can be learned.

No one doubts the advantage of applying this principle in other departments of mental activity. Note, for example, the rectification of every judgment in architecture that must be made after the critic has become acquainted with Asiatic achievement. Cologne and St. Peter's are then belittled by the vast temples at Madura and Trichinopoly, the group of structures at Pisa rivalled by that at Nikko, the Forum and Acropolis surpassed in remains by Ghizeh and Ise, while Florence and Paris present no palaces equal to those of Agra and Dilhi, and the Taj Mahal, perhaps the most beautiful building in the wide world.

If on earth be an Eden of bliss,
It is this, it is this, none but this.

Again in literature, who now-a-days rests content in the traditional view, that Greek and Roman letters constitute the classics? But the term classics will not be used in its right extension until not only the Romance and Teutonic masterpieces, but those also of the Semites, Iranians, Mongols and Aryans are put into the first class. The surprises of delight that await the western reader of the Indian epics will quickly justify the estimate of Sir Monier-Williams that, "The Rāmāyana and Mahā-Bhārata are no less wonderful than the Homeric poems as monuments of the human mind, and no less interesting as pictures of human life and manners in ancient time. . ."

Lastly, an extension of our studies in philosophy to India affords a striking case of the peculiar advantage attending the comparative method. The whole western world has never known more than one logic. Every effort, either to dispense with Aristotle, as by Luther in opposition to Melanchthon's claim that reform could not do without "the philosopher," or to improve on him, as of late by Hamilton, Boole, Jevons and President McCosh, has ended simply in relegation to the limbo of history. Now, what guarantee have we that this first and last and only logic has not, by the glare of its own commanding light, blinded our eyes to all fresh methodologic insight? None whatever of

actual experience free from such distraction, except the sole case of the Indian Gotama's logic. This system, though stated in a syllogism of five members stands in essential agreement with that of Aristotle, and thus affords us the only independent confirmation now extant, or henceforth and forever in this mundane sphere possible, of the rationality of our western logic.

Now, all these things are just an allegory. In religion, as in literature, art and philosophy, our thoughts must be "widened with the process of the suns," until they can lay fair claim to that proud epithet universal, which alone can satisfy a rational being, and which will some day sadden him as he reflects that for him it can be synonymous only with that terrestrial which we now neglect.

While all ministers need a broader outlook in religion, there are additional reasons why the missionary does, as personal observation in an important foreign field has abundantly shown me. Total ignorance of all religions but his own has left him, as it has his brother at home, no alternative from utterly ignoring them. And while this simple method with heathenism has, up to date, been possible by reason of the ignorance and apathy of decadent native faiths, it will not remain so now that those faiths are stimulated by contact with Christianity into renewed activity.

In India this condition of things has been recognized, and by the Anglican Church so far met as in the founding of the so-called Oxford Mission in Calcutta and the Cambridge Mission in Delhi (Delhi), both of which are composed mainly of men specially prepared on apologetic lines. In Japan, both Shinto and Buddhist societies are publishing hitherto unheard of books, magazines, newspapers, tracts and catechisms, apologetic and polemic, mainly against Christianity, and these must obviously be understood and refuted, or the missionary cause suffer. Even granting that the missionary should make no overt reference to such gain-sayings, but prefer now as heretofore to proclaim his positive gospel, it remains needful for him to adapt that gospel to the national mind in general and to the questions agitating it at any particular time. But he can do neither of these without knowledge of the dominant religious ideas of his hearers, or

without some knowledge of the methods dictated by comprehensive study of religion. Everyone admits this principle in respect to the home preacher, and it applies with ten-fold force to the foreign one. The danger arising from ignorance, even of the much less profound relations of etiquette and taste, is so considerable that while his lack of control over the language is to the newly arrived missionary a source of great regret, it forms to his more experienced brethren a source of great relief. They know well what havoc with the emotions of his hearers such an untrained zealot would work. It is in response to such facts as these that the original and comprehensive mind at the head of the University of Chicago included a chair of comparative religion among the manifold activities of that latest wonder among our educational institutions; for one of his purposes is thereby to equip missionaries the better to understand, and thus the better to influence and direct the beings already rational, often cultivated, and always religious they are sent to help.

It was natural that the science of religion should be the last to adopt the comparative method, since, as is well known to all students of the subject, in no other sphere of thought is man so conservative and complacent as here. It is remarkably hard for us, as no doubt for each religionist, to concede this about our religion; but we have no choice other than between it and denying that Christianity is a religion at all. The cause of the tardiness in applying the comparative method was of course the conviction that non-Christian faiths presented nothing worthy of being compared, while Christianity gave us everything worth being known. Such conviction however is no longer defensible, now that two of these non-Christian systems, Vaishnavism and Buddhism, are known to present features so exalted, as well as forms so similar, as to make at any rate plausible the thesis that Christianity itself has been derived from them. The comparison then is worth making. And that not only because of the intrinsic value of the content of these non-Christian religions, but because only by comparison can Christianity itself ever be estimated at its true worth. What Goethe said of language holds equally true of religion, "He who knows one knows none." Said Mr. Joseph

Cook in his address at the Congress on Missions at Chicago, "The more the study of comparative religion has progressed, the more the brilliancy of the Word of God has come forth" But had this conclusion, naturally and properly gratifying to us, been precisely the reverse, our duty in prosecuting the study would have been increased rather than otherwise. This we shall readily accede to, just because it is a hypothesis, a mere idea that we believe will never be realized. But let us test ourselves with a little reality. Imagine it clearly shown that we could progress unto more essential conformity with that Word, or even that we could advance into truth not explicitly declared in it, do we now stand in a frame of mind that justifies the hope that we should be willing to accept that showing. If not, we refuse to bear a burden that our missionaries every day lay on those they are sent to convert from old ideas and practices to new ones, and our refusal is referable only to senseless prejudice. Those that in their zeal for Christianity thus worship its Scripture, thereby really put it on a level with the Buddhism they condemn, whose founder "took pains to make his beloved disciple and cousin Ananda understand that the truth embodied in the Dharma or Law which he had taught, was all that ought to take his place and represent him when he was gone." With this command contrast this comfort, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth."

It may be well for our preachers to know for themselves this superiority of the Word of God, and not simply assume it, as the mass must do, while as at present quite ignorant of all other words believed to be from God. With that improved equipment they will be justified, if they feel a demand for religious progress, in making it on the basis of what they know to be the best hitherto vouchsafed man. In this possible betterment of man lies, of course, the deepest ground for promoting the study of hierarchy, as of anything else.

It may be worth while to remark that the enlarged study of religion will be useful in offsetting the undoubtedly strong trend of the current of religious thought towards mere ethics, whether manifested in the ethical societies which are mostly *extra ecclesia*,

or in the new sociological studies of our progressive seminaries. Worship and communion with the Highest may need resuscitation before long unless a scientific conviction that man has never yet done long without them warn us in due time.

The need for instruction in hierology has already received such recognition that within the last three years chairs of Comparative Religion have been founded at Yale, Cornell, the University of the City of New York, and the University of Chicago, while numerous lectures by specialists have been provided at Harvard and at the University of Pennsylvania. These provisions have been made with great promptness, in harmony with many similar ones in the progressive European states, so soon as the labors of specialists had given a body of literature and a record of observations sufficient to base induction upon. If one may measure the future importance of hierology as an academic discipline by the extent of the labors of these specialists, it will be great indeed. When preparing his *Sociology*, Mr. H. Spencer was driven to employ several assistants to traverse the extensive literature bearing on non-civilized religions alone; the series of *Sacred Books of the East* has reached its fortieth volume while representing only the masterpieces of the higher religions, and is yet incomplete; while four great capitals in Europe each supply a specialist on Shinto, the ethnic faith of far-away Japan, and about which nothing reliable is yet generally known.

It appears then perhaps sufficiently clear that progress in theological training should include hierology. Meanwhile those who would study it have but six institutions in America where they can do so.